



County of Los Angeles
Sheriff's Department Headquarters
4700 Ramona Boulevard
Monterey Park, California 91754-2169



LEROY D. BACA, SHERIFF

January 22, 2004

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**IMPACT OF PROPOSED CURTAILMENTS AND CUTS TO SHERIFF'S
DEPARTMENT'S FISCAL YEAR 2004-05 BUDGET**

As you are well aware, the Sheriff's Department has endured more than \$166 million dollars in cuts during the past two fiscal years, suffering the loss of more than 1,000 deputy sheriff positions and over 200 professional staff items. As a result, our community policing and Town Sheriff programs have been decimated, the Asian Crimes investigative unit was disbanded, our drug and domestic violence rehabilitation facility was closed, and many key administrative and technical services positions were cut. Despite these losses, we have done our best to provide continued high-level public safety services while masking the pain of these cuts from the public. We continue to provide highly demanded Countywide investigative services, security for transit services, courtrooms and jails, and operate 24 patrol stations, serving 40 contract cities and over one million residents in the unincorporated areas of the County.

For this coming fiscal year (2004-05), the Sheriff's Department is once again being asked to bear the lion's share of anticipated budget cuts. Combined with the Governor's recent decision to shift more property tax revenue to the State, the skyrocketing costs of Workers' Compensation, decline in Federal funds, and reductions in local contracts (community colleges and trial court funding), it appears that the Sheriff's Department will be faced with another \$149 million in cuts. That amounts to over 21% of the \$708 million in general fund dollars your Board allocated to us this fiscal year. Add to that an estimated \$45 million of "additional salary savings" – the amount the Chief Administrative Office attributes to "unfunded staffing" and therefore withholds from my budget – and **the Sheriff's Department is facing an unconscionable \$194 million in cuts on July 1.**

A Tradition of Service

I understand that the ongoing fiasco in Sacramento has made balancing the County's budget a difficult task. Your Board has tough choices to make when deciding how to spread shrinking resources among the various departments. However, I must mention what consequences face us if your Board approves cuts of the magnitude described above to the Sheriff's Department.

I've already closed two jail facilities in the previous two years; inmates currently serve only 10% of their sentences. Further budget cuts will mean the closure of more jail beds and the **release of additional prisoners. That includes those who are in jail for domestic violence crimes, drunk driving, certain sex crimes, child abuse matters, gun possession, drug use and theft.** I will neither have the personnel nor the facilities to accommodate these prisoners. This course of action further erodes our justice system and greatly jeopardizes public safety.

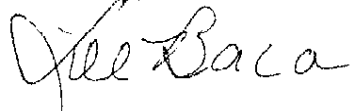
If that isn't enough, the effects of these cuts will finally be felt firsthand by the public. In a budget where 82% is attributable to personnel costs, a \$194 million cut means there will be far less patrol cars in the unincorporated areas, where gang violence and murders continue to rise. Response times to calls for service will be unthinkable slow. I will be forced to drastically curtail investigations of major narcotic operations, large-scale fraud rings, and missing persons. I will not have the resources to maintain a child-abuse detail, a gambling or vice unit, or an emergency search and rescue team. Perhaps of greater consequence, I will not have enough non-contract (general fund) personnel to adequately combat gang violence or maintain a vigilant eye on Los Angeles-based terrorists.

What I'm describing to you is not meant to be a threat or a political ploy. I am merely writing to inform you of my concerns, because these should be your Board's concerns too. Considering the number of people we serve, in the variety of capacities we are obligated to perform, the Sheriff's Department is stretched thin. As I mentioned earlier, we are well aware of your Board's difficulty in balancing a budget with shrinking revenues, rising costs, and increased demands for service. We have done what we can during the past two years to keep our communities safe despite the \$166 million in cuts.

Public safety and the criminal justice system in Los Angeles County are at stake. I ask that you please consider this when you deliberate over the 2004-05 budget.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



LEROY D. BACA
SHERIFF